Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-4 (cancelled)

5. (currently amended) The method of [[4]] 17 wherein ~~at least one~~ the cropped image version is created at step (b) such that, to the extent possible, the minimum image area is positioned substantially in the center of the cropped image version.

6. (currently amended) The method of claim [[4]] 17 wherein ~~at least one~~ the cropped image version is created at step (b) such that, to the extent possible, the minimum image area is positioned in a location in the cropped image version that is substantially proportional to the position of the minimum image area in the selected image.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim [[4]] 17 wherein ~~the~~ step ~~of creating~~ (b) includes resizing the selected image prior to performing a cropping operation.

8. (cancelled)

9. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ 19 wherein ~~at least one~~ the cropped image version is created at step (b) such that any content that is cropped from the selected image during a cropping operation is cropped substantially equally from opposite edges of the ideal image area, whereby the cropped image version is created substantially from the center of the ideal image area

10. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ 19 wherein ~~the~~ step ~~of creating~~ (b) includes resizing the selected image prior to performing a cropping operation.

11. (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 22 wherein at least one cropped image version is created such that, to the extent possible, the ~~minimum~~ second image area is positioned in a location in the cropped image version that is substantially proportional to the position of the ~~minimum~~ second image area in the ~~ideal~~ first image area.

13. (cancelled)

14. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 22 wherein at least one cropped image version is created at step (b) such that any content that is cropped from the selected image during a cropping operation is cropped substantially equally from opposite edges of the ~~ideal~~ first image area, whereby the cropped image version is created substantially from the center of the ~~ideal~~ first image area

15. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 22 wherein ~~the step of creating includes~~ step (b) and (c) include resizing the selected image prior to performing a cropping operation.

16. (currently amended) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps of claim ~~11~~ 19.

17. (previously presented) An automated cropping method for an electronic image having a defined minimum image area, the minimum image area having been previously selected by an image preparer based on at least the image preparer's visual review of the image, the method comprising:

(a) determining at least the size of an image container,

(b) if a cropped version of the image can be created that meets the conditions of (i) filling the image container, (ii) containing at least the minimum image area, and (iii) having at least a predetermined minimum image resolution, creating the cropped version of the image for the image container, and

(c) if a cropped image version cannot be created at step (b), identifying the image as being incompatible with the image container.

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein the cropped version is created at step (b) such that the cropped version includes as much of the image as possible.

19. (previously presented) An automated cropping method for an image having a defined ideal image area, the ideal image area having been previously selected by an image preparer based on at least the image preparer's visual review of the image, the method comprising

(a) determining at least the size of an image container,

(b) if a cropped version of the image can be created such that the cropped version meets the conditions of (i) filling the image container, (ii) having at least a predetermined minimum image resolution and (iii) including only content from the ideal image area, creating a corresponding cropped version containing image content entirely from within the ideal image area,

(c) if a cropped version of the image cannot be created at step (b) and if a cropped version can be created such that the cropped version meets the conditions of (i) filling the image container and (ii) having at least a predetermined minimum image resolution, creating a corresponding cropped version containing at least some image content from outside the ideal image area, and

(d) if a cropped version of the image cannot be created at step (b) or step (c), identifying the image as being incompatible with the image container.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 19 wherein the corresponding cropped version is created at step (b) such that the cropped version meets the further condition of (iv) including as much of the ideal image area as possible.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 19 wherein the corresponding cropped version created at step (c) such that the cropped version meets the further condition of (iii) including as little as possible of the image that is outside the ideal image area.

22. (previously presented) An automated cropping method for an image having a predefined first image area and a predefined second image area, the first image area being smaller than the image and the second image area being smaller than the first image area, the method comprising

(a) determining at least the size of an image container,

(b) if the image can be cropped such that a cropped version can be created that has at least a predetermined minimum image resolution when sized to fit the image container, contains all of the second image area, and contains no part of the image that is outside of the first image area, creating a corresponding cropped version,

(c) if a cropped version cannot be created at step (b) and the image can be cropped such that a cropped version can be created that has at least a predetermined minimum image resolution when sized to fit the image container and contains all of the second image area, creating a corresponding cropped version containing at least some image content from outside the first image area,

(d) if a cropped version cannot be created at step (b) or (c), identifying the image as being incompatible with the image container.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 22 wherein the corresponding cropped version created at step (b) is created such that it includes as much of the first image area as possible.

24. (previously presented) The method of claim 22 wherein the corresponding cropped version created at step (c) is created such that it includes as little of the image outside of the first image area as possible.

25. (currently amended) The method of claim 22 wherein the cropped version is created such that, to the extent possible, the second area is positioned substantially in the center of the cropped version.

26. (previously presented) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps of claim 22.

27. (currently amended) An image processing system comprising

at least one server system having data storage means,

a plurality of layouts stored on the server system and including one or more image containers,

a plurality of images and associated minimum image area information stored on the server system, the associated information for each image including at least information sufficient to define the size and location of at least a minimum image area in the image, the minimum image area having been chosen by an image preparer based on at least the image preparer's visual review of the image, and

an image processing program executable on the server system and having program code for creating at least one cropped image version of at least one image selected from the plurality of stored images ~~such that the cropped image version is sized to fit at least one image container in at least one stored layout and contains at least the minimum image area of the selected image~~ , including at least program code for

(a) determining at least the size of an image container,

(b) if a cropped version of the image can be created that meets the conditions of (i) filling the image container, (ii) containing at least the minimum image area, and (iii) having at least a predetermined minimum image resolution, creating the cropped version of the image for the image container, and

(c) if a cropped image version cannot be created at step (b), identifying the image as being incompatible with the image container.

28. (currently amended) An image processing system comprising

at least one server system having data storage means,

a plurality of layouts stored on the server system and including one or more image containers,

a plurality of images and associated ideal image information stored on the server system, the associated information for each image including at least information sufficient to define the size and location of at least an ideal image area in the image, the

ideal image area having been chosen by an image preparer based on at least the image preparer's visual review of the image, and

an image processing program executable on the server system and having program code for creating at least one cropped image version of at least one image selected from the plurality of stored images ~~such that the cropped image version is sized to fit at least one image container in at least one stored layout and is created, to the extent possible, from the ideal image area~~, including at least program code for

(a) determining at least the size of an image container,

(b) if a cropped version of the image can be created such that the cropped version meets the conditions of (i) filling the image container, (ii) having at least a predetermined minimum image resolution and (iii) including only content from the ideal image area, creating a corresponding cropped version containing image content entirely from within the ideal image area,

(c) if a cropped version of the image cannot be created at step (b) and if a cropped version can be created such that the cropped version meets the conditions of (i) filling the image container and (ii) having at least a predetermined minimum image resolution, creating a corresponding cropped version containing at least some image content from outside the ideal image area, and

(d) if a cropped version of the image cannot be created at step (b) or step (c), identifying the image as being incompatible with the image container.

29. (currently amended) An image processing system comprising

at least one server system having data storage means,

a plurality of layouts stored on the server system and including one or more image containers,

a plurality of images and associated ~~minimum and ideal~~ image information stored on the server system, the associated information for each image including at least information sufficient to define the size and location of at least a ~~minimum~~ first image area and ~~an ideal~~ a second image area in the image, the ~~minimum and ideal image areas~~

~~having been chosen by an image preparer based on at least the image preparer's visual review of the image~~ the first image area being smaller than the image and the second image area being smaller than the first image area, and

an image processing program executable on the server system and having program code for creating at least one cropped image version of at least one image selected from the plurality of stored images ~~such that the cropped image version is sized to fit~~ fill ~~at least one image container in at least one stored layout, is created to the extent possible from the ideal image area, and contains at least the minimum image area~~ , including at least program code for

(a) determining at least the size of an image container,

(b) if the image can be cropped such that a cropped version can be created that has at least a predetermined minimum image resolution when sized to fit the image container, contains all of the second image area, and contains no part of the image that is outside of the first image area, creating a corresponding cropped version,

(c) if a cropped version cannot be created at step (b) and the image can be cropped such that a cropped version can be created that has at least a predetermined minimum image resolution when sized to fit the image container and contains all of the second image area, creating a corresponding cropped version containing at least some image content from outside the first image area,

(d) if a cropped version cannot be created at step (b) or (c), identifying the image as being incompatible with the image container.

30 – 32 (cancelled)

33. (currently amended) The method of claim [[4]] 17 further comprising producing one or more printed copies of the product design containing at least one cropped image version.

34. (currently amended) The method of claim [[4]] 17 wherein at least some of the retained images have one or more keywords associated therewith and wherein the at least

one image selected from the plurality of retained images is selected based on at least one keyword associated with the image.

35. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ 19 further comprising producing one or more printed copies of the product design containing at least one cropped image version.

36. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ 19 wherein at least some of the retained images have one or more keywords associated therewith and wherein the at least one image selected from the plurality of retained images is selected based on at least one keyword associated with the image.

37. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 22 further comprising producing one or more printed copies of the product design containing at least one cropped image version.

38. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 22 wherein at least some of the retained images have one or more keywords associated therewith and wherein the at least one image selected from the plurality of retained images is selected based on at least one keyword associated with the image.

39. (new) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps of claim 17.